

HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Ex-lawmaker hospitalized after McAllen car crash

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WASHINGTON — Former Rep. Eligio "Kika" De la Garza was being treated in a hospital Wednesday for injuries he and his wife suffered when the car they were riding in was involved in a head-on crash in Texas, an associate said.

The accident occurred in McAllen, in southern Texas, on Tuesday, Rep. Ruben Hinojosa, D-Texas, said in a statement. De la Garza, 80, and his wife, Lucille, were hospitalized. De la Garza underwent surgery Tuesday night and his wife had surgery Wednesday, said Hinojosa's spokeswoman, Elizabeth Esfahani.

The family was not immediately releasing other details.

Esfahani said two cars collided and one of those hit the car carrying the De la Garzas head-on. Messages left for a McAllen Police spokesman after business hours were not immediately returned.

De la Garza, a Democrat, served 32 years in Congress after he was elected in 1964 and was chairman of the House Agricultural Committee for 14 years. He was a staunch defender of farm programs, civil rights and equality for minorities. He also worked to improve relations between the U.S. and Mexico.

He was the second Mexican-American elected to Congress from Texas and is one of the founders of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

De la Garza previously served six terms in the Texas Legislature.